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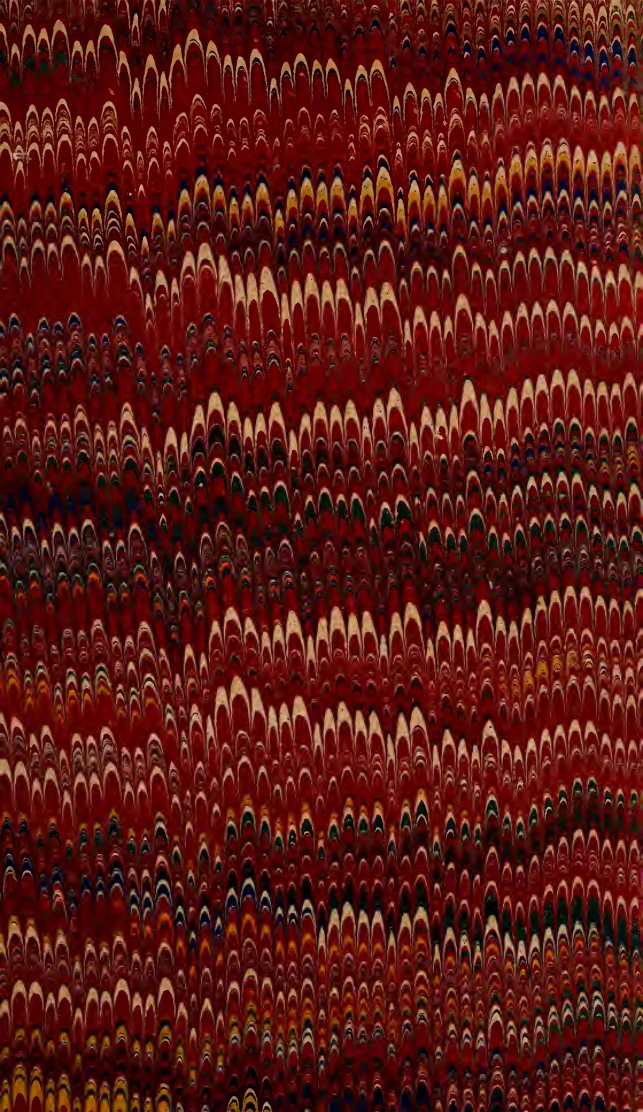

TWO COMEDIES.

TWO COMEDIES:

AN ILL WIND;

AN ABJECT APOLOGY.

BY

F. DONALDSON, JR.

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Amor tenet omnia:
Mutat cordis intima;
Quærit amor devia:
Frigidus et calidus et tepidus;
Amor audax, pavidus;
Est fidus atque perfidus.

Carmina Burana.

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AN ILL WIND.

SCENE. — *The parlor of a city house. Time, March. A gentleman of about twenty-seven years sits in earnest conversation with a young lady of apparently his own age. Both look a little perplexed, a little sad, a good deal out of humor.*

MR. ROBERT WHYTE. Marion, are you going to give me a definite answer?

MISS MARION DAY. No. (*After a pause*) Bob, this is very foolish.

MR. WHYTE (*drearily*). I don't see why it's foolish. Is all *love* foolish?

MISS DAY (*turning towards him*). Now, Bob, do be reasonable. You know it can't be, (*she hesitates*) as yet, anyway.

MR. WHYTE (*appealingly*). Why not yet?

MISS DAY. We know each other too well —

MR. WHYTE. I should think that were an advantage, not a hinderance.

MISS DAY. It is for the woman, not for the man.

MR. WHYTE. Why not, pray?

MISS DAY. It's the only thing that keeps a man in love.

MR. WHYTE. What?

MISS DAY. The not knowing a woman. — having to find out her many sidedness,

MR. WHYTE (*with a sigh*). Don't you care for me?

MISS DAY. Certainly I do.

MR. WHYTE. Then, why not put an end to this uncertainty?

MISS DAY (*after a pause, and thoughtfully*). Because I don't want to marry *now*.

MR. WHYTE. Do you care for any one else?

MISS DAY. No; (*and quickly*) and I don't know that I love you.

MR. WHYTE. But, my dear girl, I've been faithful to you seven long years.

MISS DAY. I'm sorry it seemed so long to you. I thought the years happy ones.

MR. WHYTE. So they were; (*with determination*) but I've waited long enough.

MISS DAY (*appealingly*). Well, just wait a *little* longer, — say until Christmas.

MR. WHYTE (*interrupting*). I've loved you —

MISS DAY. I know, Bob; and romance *is* more pleasant than history, love than marriage.

MR. WHYTE (*warmly*). That's no reason why you should not give me an answer now.

MISS DAY. I have.

MR. WHYTE (*gloomily*). But it's not the one I wish.

MISS DAY (*sadly*). I'm sorry, Bob. I do love you (*he starts up*) in a way, but not enough to say yes *right now*. (*With a deep sigh*) Do wait a little while.

MR. WHYTE (*desperately*). I don't think I *can* wait.

MISS DAY (*seriously*). But we must

not hurry into an agreement which we may regret all our lives. Marriage is a thing you can't undo, or rather we couldn't.

MR. WHYTE. *I* would not want to.

MISS DAY (*wearily*). I've said the same thing to you so often. It would not be right in me to engage myself to you, simply because I am fond of you, and can't say I like any one better.

MR. WHYTE. Are you ever going to find out?

MISS DAY (*hopelessly*). Why won't you let matters remain as they are. We are good friends.

MR. WHYTE (*very seriously*). Friends! It cannot always be friends. (*After a pause*) Marion, you've put me off long enough. I've come here for *yes* or *no*.

MISS DAY. I can't say it now.

MR. WHYTE (*desperately*). But you must.

MISS DAY (*warmly*). You've no right to force me this way.

MR. WHYTE. I'm not forcing you. You do not know how I feel. It is now

or never. (*With a gesture of impatience, he rises and walks to the fire-place.*)

MISS DAY (*appealingly*). Bob, we've known each other since children. I don't want to break; to send you away.

MR. WHYTE (*turning, and walking towards her*). Then give me the right to stay.

MISS DAY. But *can't* you see how hard it is for me.

MR. WHYTE (*doggedly, as he drops into a chair by her side*). No.

MISS DAY (*turning towards him*). But I've never thought of you in this light.

MR. WHYTE. It's not because I have not spoken of it.

MISS DAY. I know; but it's only lately it's become so serious.

MR. WHYTE (*desperately*). Will you give me an answer?

MISS DAY (*after a pause*). I will in three months.

MR. WHYTE. I won't wait any longer. You *can* answer me if you choose.

MISS DAY (*quietly*). You are very unreasonable. Suppose I should say no.

MR. WHYTE (*quickly*). Any thing's better than this miserable uncertainty.

MISS DAY (*sadly*). Would you break off all our friendship?

MR. WHYTE. Yes.

MISS DAY (*almost tearfully*). Would you go away for good?

MR. WHYTE. Yes. (*There is a long silence.*)

MISS DAY. If you really loved me so much —

MR. WHYTE (*grasping her wrist, and desperately*). If I really loved you so much! Heavens! girl, how much and how long do you wish to be loved?

MISS DAY (*removing her hand*). More than I believe you love me. Three months is a short time. Marriage is a much more serious thing for a woman than for a man, Bob. A woman gives up every thing, — family, friends, home, all. A man scarcely any thing. If he tires of the bargain, he has his business, his club, and what not. A woman, nothing. Her husband should be, or at least would be my, *all.* You wish me to to settle all this at once. It's better to wait.

MR. WHYTE (*without looking at her*). I've waited long enough. Will you answer now,—*yes*, or *no?*

MISS DAY (*with deep trouble in her voice*). I can't.

MR. WHYTE (*fiercely*). Marion, I swear to you, this is the last time I'll ever speak to you.

MISS DAY (*throwing herself back in her chair*). You're very wrong and cruel, Bob. I don't want you to go away, but I *can't* bind myself now.

MR. WHYTE. You've trifled with me long enough.

MISS DAY (*indignantly*). I never trifled with you. (*Then angrily*) I've cared too much for your whims.

MR. WHYTE (*sarcastically*). Seven years of *whims*, I suppose.

MISS DAY (*gently*). I didn't mean that, Bob.

MR. WHYTE (*rising*). You'll regret this, Marion.

MISS DAY (*she rises quickly, and catches him by the arm*). Bob, Bob! you're not going to leave me this way?

MR. WHYTE (*drawing himself back*). Yes, I am. You've treated me heartlessly, cruelly.

MISS DAY (*quietly*). You are angry now. You know that's not so. Three months is not long compared to a lifetime.

MR. WHYTE. Seven years is, though. (*He faces her.*) Will you give me an answer?

MISS DAY (*despairingly*). I can't now.

MR. WHYTE (*looking at her, and doggedly*). Then it will be never. You'll regret this, by Heaven. If it breaks my heart —

MISS DAY. Men's hearts don't break, Bob.

MR. WHYTE. I'll never speak to you again. I hope some one will get even with you for the way you've treated me.

MISS DAY. Oh, Bob!

MR. WHYTE (*madly*). Yes, Heaven knows I do. I'll make you suffer as you've made me.

MISS DAY. I never did so intentionally.

MR. WHYTE. I believe you care for me; and yet, for a silly, ridiculous fancy, you won't give me yes or no.

MISS DAY. In three months.

MR. WHYTE (*excitedly*). I tell you I won't wait. I won't bear it any longer. (*He comes closer to her.*) Marion, you almost make me hate you. I'll make you rue it, if — (*He walks away without finishing.*)

MISS DAY (*quietly and in tearful voice*). Bob, you've no right to speak to me so. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped. I've done my best. (*She drops into the chair.*) I've done what I thought best for you and me. (*And then to herself.*) But perhaps it is best it should end thus. (*By this time,* WHYTE *is heard slamming the front-door.*)

SCENE. — *Four months later. Elegant bachelor's quarters at Newport. A gentleman of fifty, perhaps, is reclining at his ease in a hammock swung between the windows of his room. Roused by a knock at the door, he lays*

aside the book he is reading; as, in answer to his "Come in," *a young man enters, who, without word or ceremony, proceeds to take off coat and vest, and with* "Well, life's not worth living," *throws himself into a convenient chair.* MR. GEORGE JAMES *views him amusedly, and then*

MR. GEORGE JAMES. Rather pessimistic sentiments for one of your age!

MR. ROBERT WHYTE. Confound it, George! you are always speaking as if I were a baby.

MR. JAMES. Well, you are. How old are you?

MR. WHYTE. Thirty yesterday.

MR. JAMES (*throwing himself back*). Wait till you come to forty year.

MR. WHYTE (*with sarcasm*). "Wait till I come to forty years?" Why, man, I've been through more in the last four months, than you have in your whole life.

MR. JAMES (*with a grunt*). Some female, I'll bet. What's up now?

MR. WHYTE (*with surprise*). Haven't you heard?

MR. JAMES. How should I? You've been here ten days, and I have not laid eyes on you. I knew you were down here, with a woeful ballad to your mistress' eyebrow.

MR. WHYTE. See here, George, I am very fond of you, — I was going to say, I love you like a father, — but I do wish you would be less sarcastic.

MR. JAMES. A fool, a fool. I met a fool in the forest.

MR. WHYTE. Well, I suppose I am about women; but honestly, old fellow, I want to talk to you of a very serious matter. You see —

MR. JAMES. Imprimis, I don't see. You've made a fool of yourself. It's a great pity young people's marriages cannot be made for them. I'm satisfied the *marriage de convenance* is much better than these foolish matches you make yourselves.

MR. WHYTE. You had best wait until the match is made.

MR. JAMES. *You* had best be off with your old love before you're on with the new.

MR. WHYTE (*quickly*). What do you mean? I thought you did not know.

MR. JAMES. There needs no ghost come from the grave, or Boston either, to tell us that. All Newport's talking about it.

MR. WHYTE. I'm sorry to hear it. I suppose I must be thankful it's not in the "World's" society gossip.

MR. JAMES (*sitting up*). Now, young man, let me give you a piece of advice. Be sure you know your own mind before you try to know another's. (*After a pause*) Why, in Heaven's name, did you go and engage yourself to Helen Sturgis six weeks after you broke with that other female?

MR. WHYTE (*indignantly*). I did not break with her; there was nothing to break — no engagement.

MR. JAMES. Well, there ought to have been, if there was not. Somebody said you got mad because she put her head out the back window when you called, and sent you word she was out.

MR. WHYTE (*fiercely*). That's a lie!

MR. JAMES (*laughing*). Oh, of course

I was joking; but you boys are such fools. (*He reaches for a cigar on a table near, lights it deliberately, throws himself back in the hammock, and after a few puffs*) In marrying, a man runs such awful risks. Now, there's the possible mother-in-law; you may have her on your hands. A terrible fate! Who was it said, if you have to choose between living with your mother-in-law and shooting yourself, never hesitate — shoot her?

MR. WHYTE (*laughing*). Were you *ever* in love?

MR. JAMES (*seriously*). Some day I'll tell you all about it. But what's this last affair of yours?

MR. WHYTE (*rising*). Well, you see Marion Day had made my life such a burden, that I determined to have done with her. She wouldn't say yes, she wouldn't say no. Finally, driven to despair, I deserted; made desperate love to Helen Sturgis. — She's staying at the Leroys', you know. I'm there too. — And now I'm engaged to one woman, in love with another. (*He walks to the window,*

and, after a pause,) Oh, it's the devil! I'm suffering the tortures of the damned!

MR. JAMES. Poor fellow! as Talleyrand said, *déjà.*

MR. WHYTE (*smiling*). I'm afraid so, indeed.

MR. JAMES. Well, my dear boy, I cannot sympathize much with you. I have given you bushels of good advice; I've told you to stick at your work, and leave this so-called society gloriously alone, as I do.

MR. WHYTE. You make a fossil of yourself.

MR. JAMES. Why, of course; what would you expect a man of my years to do? I have always held that there were but three reasons for a man's going out, anyway; and I can't urge one of them as an excuse.

MR. WHYTE (*grumpily*). What are they, pray?

MR. JAMES (*giving a long puff at his cigar*). Well, a man goes out either to get a wife; to look after his own; or to look after some one else's. Now, my dear Bob,

I neither want the first; nor am I haply possessed of the second; and Heaven forbid I should imitate their Frenchified fuss, and poach on another's preserves! Ergo, I don't go out.

MR. WHYTE. Oh, it's all fair. Every one's in love with the next man's wife now. I often wonder how it would hold if they could swap off.

MR. JAMES (*earnestly*). Oh! There would be no change. It must be reformed altogether. As for those that *are* married, what puzzles me is, why they did marry.

MR. WHYTE. For love, of course.

MR. JAMES (*with infinite sarcasm*). For love, indeed! (*He sits up.*) I tell you, Bob, the average man and wife, after three years, wonder *why* they did it; how they ever came together.

MR. WHYTE (*goes to the table, lights a pipe, and stands facing his friend*). Iago-like, you are nothing, if not critical, where there's a woman concerned.

MR. JAMES. My dear boy, now see here; I confess to having been deeply in

love *once* (*with emphasis*). I thank Heaven it turned out as it did. *I* would have married that woman. *She* married some one else. I but state my honest conviction when I say, that she worried her first husband, a splendid fellow, into the grave in three years, and just nine months after was married again; to a tough old customer, this time. She couldn't kill *him*. He gave her all the money she wanted, and kept out of her way — sensible man. — (*After a pause*) She's the mother of nine as ordinary children as the sun ever shone upon; there isn't one of them should not give their excuse for living; nine souls, if such unthinking creatures have souls. Ugh, it makes me shudder! (*He sinks back in the hammock.*)

MR. WHYTE (*as he walks back to a chair by James*). I shan't be in the humor of marriage, if I listen to you much longer.

MR. JAMES. Humor of marriage! *You* don't stay engaged long enough.

MR. WHYTE. Well, I shall this time.

(*After a pause*) Marriage must be the happiest state of man.

MR. JAMES (*energetically*). Happiest state of man! (*Sitting up.*) Ba! You don't know what you're talking about. It is of woman, I grant you. It's the only thing open to them; they marry in self-defence.

MR. WHYTE (*hopelessly*). Oh, Lord!

MR. JAMES. Yes, this marrying and giving in marriage is all very fine for the first three months, just about.

MR. WHYTE (*laughing*). The billing and cooing's not so bad.

MR. JAMES. Except your married man coos first, and she *bills* afterward.

MR. WHYTE. Nonsense. It's a charming state of —

MR. JAMES (*interrupting*). Charming state! I remember an old friend saying, that he was so fond of his wife during the first three months of marriage, he could have eaten her, and at the end of the second he was sorry he hadn't.

MR. WHYTE. Oh! You're a rank heretic, George. No marriages, what would become of the world?

MR. JAMES. Leave that to their own ingenuity.

MR. WHYTE. Now, how much happier you'd be with some one to administer to your wants.

MR. JAMES. Minister to my wants, indeed! It's not the fashion now for wives to stay at home. I heard a man the other night at the club say that his wife hadn't been at home one evening in seventeen.

MR. WHYTE. That's all very fine; but was he?

MR. JAMES. I don't know; but I've no doubt she left him first. A husband's not a fashionable appendage nowadays. He's at best the means, pecuniary and otherwise; a sort of social umbrella, to protect his wife from the reigning beaus, I suppose. He's the bridge which enables a woman to cross from that world where she can do nothing, to that in which she *may* do any thing. (*After a long puff*) I don't propose to turn myself into either an umbrella or a bridge.

MR. WHYTE. All the same, you know

a lovely woman's the most attractive thing in the world.

MR. JAMES. I grant you. Framed to make men false; fair to look at, devils to possess — in marriage.

MR. WHYTE. But marriage begins with the honeymoon.

MR. JAMES (*interrupting*). And if it could only end with it. Lady Mary Wortley Montague was on the right track when she tried to get a bill through Parliament to make marriages, like leases, hold for a term of years.

MR. WHYTE (*smiling*). Why wasn't it carried?

MR. JAMES. Because some one suggested, that a lease contained a covenant to keep and leave in good repair, reasonable wear and tear excepted. That stuck her.

MR. WHYTE. That certainly would be impossible nowadays.

MR. JAMES. I should think so. No, marriage is not for such as I. I am glad I'm too old for it.

MR. WHYTE. Too old! When should a man marry, pray?

MR. JAMES (*soberly*). A young man not yet, an elder man not at all.

MR. WHYTE. Well, we'll see about you.

MR. JAMES. My dear fellow, it's dangerous for a man of my years to marry. A wife would be in my way, damnably, as Byron remarked to his spouse.

MR. WHYTE (*rising*). If I listen to you, I'll turn unbeliever myself.

MR. JAMES. Not at all. You're young. I'd take a better-half myself if I was your age; (*after a pause*) if I could marry her in sections, as Sydney Smith said of the fat woman, and as I tired of one, try another.

MR. WHYTE (*earnestly*). If you'll stop this chaff for a few minutes, I'll be obliged. I came here in deep trouble to get your advice. I'm in a dreadful box. (*After a pause*) I don't know why I did it. (*He rises, walks to the table, pours out a glass of brandy, and swallows it off.*) If I thought it respectable, I'd go on a regular — I'd drown dull care. What *am* I to do about it?

MR. JAMES (*sternly*). Stick to it like a man. A gentleman can't jilt a woman. You did it yourself.

MR. WHYTE. No, I didn't; Marion drove me to it.

MR. JAMES. Supposing she did; is that any excuse for your making a defenceless girl suffer? What right have you to compromise Miss Sturgis? If you break with her, I'll never speak to you again.

MR. WHYTE. Now, see here, old fellow, I am not going to break with her; but what a position I'm in! I love Marion Day; and, to put it mildly, I don't care for Helen Sturgis at all.

MR. JAMES (*carelessly*). Mrs. Malaprop says it's better to begin with a little aversion.

MR. WHYTE (*not noticing the interruption*). What *shall* I do about it? I've loved Marion for years.

MR. JAMES. You are the better prepared for marriage. Some one said it was necessary for a man to have thoroughly known one woman before marrying.

Now you've done that. (*After a pause*) My dear boy, I cannot give you any comfort. I am disgusted with you; and, if it were not for the girl's sake, I'd like to see you "noosed" now. (*He gets out of the hammock, goes to the mantel, relights his cigar, and throws himself into the chair vacated by* WHYTE. *There is a long silence,* WHYTE *moves nervously about the room, looks at himself in the glass, and murmurs*), "By Jove, this thing's telling on me."

MR. JAMES (*with a grunt*). It ought to.

MR. WHYTE (*turning round*). Will you tell me why you have not married?

MR. JAMES. I found my bachelor life more to my taste. The years passed so rapidly, too, that I was soon too old for it. I wouldn't marry an old girl, and I can't marry a young one; for, after all, the young wife of an old man is only a girl who belongs to somebody else.

MR. WHYTE. This does not tell me why you did not marry in the beginning.

MR. JAMES (*settling himself in his chair, and seriously*). I'll tell you, Bob,

in confidence. (*A pained look passes over his face.*) My rather bitter feeling towards women began when I was in college. I saw my chum's life — a brilliant fellow — ruined by a woman. (*He lights a fresh cigar.*) This is how it happened: He met the young woman one Christmas vacation, and fell deeply in love with her at first sight. He came back to college happy and bright about it all, for she seemed to return his love; and they were engaged some months later. I met her myself about that time. She was both brilliant and beautiful, but I never liked her; (*a pause*) she protested too much. Well, Arthur, my chum, was called to Europe just after class day, and did not return for nine months, during which time their correspondence was kept up. When he got back, he found that this lovely creature had been involved in a dreadful scandal. Society had dropped her. She had left her brother's house, and was living in seclusion. I knew it myself only shortly before his return, having been on a tour round the world. At any rate, it did not reach his

ears until he got back. It nearly killed him. — Just think of that woman's writing love-letters to him all the time. — He never recovered from the shock, never! He became more and more melancholy and despondent; and, just one year later, he killed himself. (*A long pause.*) This was my first experience, and I assure you it is word for word true. My second is not much better, though less disgraceful. The man was, perhaps, the most intimate friend I had, next to Arthur. These, with an experience of women all the world over, caused me to look upon marriage as undesirable for me. I thought I could accomplish my aims better unmarried, particularly after my own affair, which I'd rather not mention; and so you find me a trifle bitter, perhaps, even after all these years. As for this scrape you've gotten yourself into, I'm sorry; but you must behave like a man. You've made your bed — you know the consequences.

MR. WHYTE. You are not very consoling. Well, I must be going. (*He puts on the coat which he had thrown care-*

lessly on the floor, picks up his hat, and moves toward the door.) Marion's down here, you know: I've met her twice.

MR. JAMES. You'd best let her alone. She's perfectly lovely, they tell me.

MR. WHYTE. Well, I should think so. She is so witty and clever and beautiful, I could look at her forever. Good-by.

MR. JAMES (*as he goes out*). Yes: you seem to have found her a liberal education. Good-by.

As WHYTE *goes down, he hears* JAMES *singing,* —

> Then you'll know the worth of a lass,
> Then you'll know that a boy's an ass,
> Wait till you come to forty years.

SCENE. — *The partly enclosed corner of the porch of a Newport cottage. Hammocks are swung across from window to window. Small tables strewn with books and papers. Easy-chairs in profusion. Seated by one of the tables with a writing-desk before him is* MR. ROB-

ERT WHYTE. *He looks careworn, and his expression is troubled as he lays down his pen and soliloquizes,—*

No, by Jove, I must not. I must *not* write to her. I told Helen I'd never see Marion again. I'll keep my word. (*He tears up a half-written letter into little bits.*) There, that's settled. (*He gets up, walks nervously around, and throws himself into an easy-chair.*) I'd give any thing for just one word with her, to say good-by. It's the last chance. In six weeks I'll be married. Oh, heavens! But, as George says, I must go through with it. (*A pause.*) Would it be honorable to break with Helen? No! Yes, but is it honorable to marry a woman you do not love? (*Hopelessly*) How can I make her happy? Great Scott! I'd like to know the end of all this. Helen's jealous of Marion, and suspicious of me. How foolish and wrong it was of me to do this, simply because I was piqued! I thought Marion cared for me, and that I would get even with her, make her unhappy, if I went

off to some one else. She doesn't seem to mind at all. (*He rises, and walks out on the porch.*) I wonder if she *does* care for me. I certainly thought she did. (*He smiles bitterly*) It seems to me I've *fixed* no one but myself. (*After a pause*) I *must* see Marion before I leave, just once. I'll write to her (*he walks back to the table*), "though hell itself should gape, and bid me hold my peace." (*He sits down at the table, and writes rapidly, leans back in his chair and reads,* —

MY DEAR MARION, — I must see you before I leave. Pray see me when I call this evening. You know how miserable I am. I am to be separated from you forever.

Yours,

R. W.

He directs an envelope, and rises, leaving the note lying on his desk, then throws himself into a hammock; and, with a deep sigh, relapses into a brown study. Just then a sudden gust of wind scatters the papers, and catching up the note WHYTE *had written carries it out of the open window. It whirls about in the air*

a second, and then falls upon the greensward of the lawn. WHYTE, *his back partly to the desk, and wrapped in thought, does not notice this accident.*)

SCENE. — *The lawn of the cottage, running down to the rocks which line the shore. On a bench are seated two girls. One looks twenty, perhaps, the other a few years older. They are in deep converse.*

MISS HELEN STURGIS (*with a sigh*). Well, Emily dear, I can't say I'm very happy.

MISS EMILY HOWARD. I don't see why not. He's a bright, talented fellow, good-looking and attractive. I do think it's a pity he has so much money. He'd do something if he was poor.

MISS STURGIS (*impatiently*). Oh! it isn't that. But it was all so sudden. He literally took me by storm.

MISS HOWARD. *Avec les femmes l'amour entré par les oreilles.*

MISS STURGIS. Somehow I'm afraid, and (*thoughtfully, looking her companion full in the face*) I don't quite believe in him. (*She catches Miss Howard by the wrist.*)

MISS HOWARD (*laughing*). Don't be so tragic, Helen dear. "You've a quick eye to see. He hath deceived others, and may thee." Oh! come, come. It will be all right.

MISS STURGIS (*leaning back, and dropping her hands in her lap*). I'm very serious, Emily. I'm afraid some trouble's ahead. (*After a pause*) Marion Day's down here.

MISS HOWARD. What of that?

MISS STURGIS (*tragically*). I believe he was engaged to her.

MISS HOWARD. Why?

MISS STURGIS (*frowning*). I don't know; I seem to feel it. (*With marked emphasis*) She was *so* sweet the other day. She kissed me, — you know we went to school together, — saying, "I congratulate you, dear. I knew Mr. Whyte very (with emphasis on the very) well myself.

He's a lovely fellow." Of course, this was a *dig* at me. What she meant was, "I could have had him myself, and after I dropped him he went to you."

MISS HOWARD (*warmly*). How horrid! Just like a woman! Men never say such things to each other. A woman's sarcasm is very refined, I think. They like to "speak daggers."

MISS STURGIS (*solemnly*). He swears he never cared a rap for her, but he has certainly been different since she got here.

MISS HOWARD. Oh, nonsense! "To the jealous, trifles," you know.

MISS STURGIS. I'm not jealous, Emily. But I must say it to you, I do not trust Bob entirely.

MISS HOWARD. Then, dear, for mercy's sake, don't marry him. If you begin without trust, you'll end without love.

MISS STURGIS (*desperately*). Oh, I am tortured with uncertainty! I don't know what to do.

MISS HOWARD. Now, Helen, you must not be so suspicious. You really

love him, and all this unhappiness comes from too much self-examination.

MISS STURGIS. No, it does *not*. I'm not suspicious. He was with her the other evening every moment he could get away from me. (*After a pause*) I did not like the last letter he wrote me, either; it was entirely too distrait: it seemed to me he begun without knowing what he was going to say, and ended without knowing what he had said.

MISS HOWARD (*laughing*). Yes, dear; but that's exactly what Rousseau said a love-letter should be. (*Both are silent for some minutes.* MISS STURGIS *rises, and walks up and down nervously, stops, looks out tearfully upon the ocean, and sits down at* MISS HOWARD'S *feet.*)

MISS STURGIS (*seriously*). Emily, I believe most women, when they become engaged, never think that it means marriage.

MISS HOWARD. Then it's a great pity, for that's the serious part of it; though the thought must be an alloy. Some one said, Marriage is the death of sentiment, the grave of romance.

MISS STURGIS (*woefully*). I should hate to think that.

MISS HOWARD. Well, my dear, I don't wish to 'disgruntle' you; but you know my opinion.

MISS STURGIS. You'll fall in love yourself, some of these days.

MISS HOWARD. Perhaps so. These men we meet in society are all very nice, very swell, very *au fait;* but, like Voltaire's trees, they ought to be; they've got nothing else to do. I could care only for an earnest man.

MISS STURGIS. That's what I'm troubling about. I don't think (*shaking her head*) he is in earnest; and yet, he's a lovely fellow. (*Firmly*) I'm going to have a perfectly frank talk with him. He shall not compromise me by his attentions to Marion Day. If she had the right spirit she wouldn't let —

MISS HOWARD (*laughing*). Oh, oh! you expect too much of her. She's a woman, and likes to feel her power: she'd rather make another woman suffer than not.

MISS STURGIS. Well, I can't bear her, and I don't think she loves me.

MISS HOWARD. You may be sure of that.

MISS STURGIS (*thoughtfully*). What troubles me is, what I shall say to Mr. Whyte. I'll have it out with him, and tell him just what I think. Oh, it's miserable of him to treat me so! Emmie, I believe men begin to fall out of love as soon as a woman says yes. Their interest flags as soon as the game is bagged. (*After a pause*) What grounds do you think a girl ought to have for breaking an engagement?

MISS HOWARD (*smiling*). Grounds more relative than you have, dear.

MISS STURGIS. Yes; but how much coldness and inattention should I allow? (*Dolefully*) You've told me I might expect it after I was married, but I'm experiencing it already.

MISS HOWARD. But what can you do? You can't break an engagement so lightly.

MISS STURGIS (*tearfully*). I don't

want to break my engagement, Emmie, but — but I fear he'll force me to do it. Oh, I'm very unhappy! I wish Marion had staid away! Bob's head's completely turned since she arrived. (*She gets up, and sits beside her companion.*) I wonder if he was ever engaged to her.

MISS HOWARD. I'm sure I don't know.

MISS STURGIS. He always avoids my questions.

MISS HOWARD. My dear, you should never have asked him. A woman is not supposed to know what a man's done before he is her's. If you question them, you just make them mad, and ten to one you don't get a truthful answer.

MISS STURGIS (*sadly*). Oh, my!

MISS HOWARD. A man holds himself accountable to a woman only for his actions *after* marriage: in our world not even then, I fear.

MISS STURGIS. I'm afraid he does not love me — that he's tired of me already! Well, if every thing goes wrong, no one shall ever know my feelings. (*Putting*

her arm round her companion) I don't count you, dear. I hope we shall always be friends.

MISS HOWARD. We shall, dear (*kissing her*). I hope it will all be right. I can't think Mr. Whyte would purposely neglect you — would tire of you so soon. It's all a mistake. Now, come, don't trouble any more. (*Getting up*) Let's go into lunch. (*Miss Sturgis rises, takes her friend's arm, and they walk across the lawn towards the house.*)

MISS STURGIS (*shaking herself*). I don't know why I feel so wretchedly. (*After a pause*) Emmie, something dreadful's coming out of all this I'm sure. (*As they near the house,* MISS HOWARD *notices a piece of white paper lying on the grass ahead of them.*)

MISS HOWARD. Oh, how careless in the servants to leave things lying about so! It ruins the whole look of the green. (MISS HOWARD *stoops down and picks up* WHYTE'S *letter, which lay with the written side to the ground. She turns it over, and the words,* My dear Marion,

I must see you. You know how miserable I am, *are read by her involuntarily. A frightened look comes over her face. She makes a motion to crumple the paper in her hand, hoping to hide it from her companion. It is too late, for she feels her friend's grasp tighten on her arm, and turns to see her pale, and trembling with emotion.*)

MISS STURGIS (*quietly*). Give that to me, Emmie.

MISS HOWARD. Oh, no, Helen!

MISS STURGIS. But I must have it. (MISS HOWARD *hands her the paper. She takes it calmly, folds it, and puts it in her pocket. They walk on in silence to the house. As they come up the steps,* WHYTE *hears them, and rousing himself, gets out of the hammock. He watches the two girls go into the house, but does not see the little shudder which passes over both of them as they see him, nor the tears which are trickling down the cheeks of one, nor does he hear the remark,* — "Oh, how could he have done it!" — (WHYTE *turns, and sits down at the writing-table, and*

addresses an envelope) I'll send it anyhow. (*He picks up a sheet of folded note-paper, to find it blank, and looks nervously over his desk.*) I wonder where in the deuce that note is. Could it have blown out of the window? (*He picks up paper after paper, which the wind had blown about, but to no purpose.*) What under the sun has become of it. (*He goes through his pockets, in vain.*) I wouldn't have misplaced that note for any money. It must be found. It must be here. What a fool I was to *write*, to put any thing on paper. If that note's found, I'm done for. (*Getting up in evident alarm*) If that comes to Helen's eyes, I'll never, never be able to explain. I love her really, after all, I believe. Of course, she'll never let me speak to her again. I'll get the credit of having been jilted, of having been bounced. Every one will be laughing at me, and (*dropping into a large chair*) I'll never be able to open my mouth in my own defence. (*After a pause*) By Heaven! I don't know that I've got any. I was all right until Marion

came here. I had almost forgotten her. Confound her! She seems destined to make my life miserable. (*Desperately*) I wish I had never met her. (*After a pause*) No, I don't. I wonder what has become of that note. The wind must have spirited it away. *At this moment, a servant appears, and hands* MR. WHYTE *two notes. He drops the smaller one in his hurry, and with* "I'll bet it's come now," *opens that in his hand, out of which a ring drops, and reads,* —

DEAR MR. WHYTE, — I enclose a note which I found lying on the lawn this morning. The few words which caught my eye proved what I had already suspected. And this ends forever all between us.

Yours,
HELEN STURGIS.

(WHYTE *stops, and stares vacantly before him.*) Great Heavens! I wonder if Marion would speak to me if she knew the truth. (*After a long silence, he perceives the second note, and smiles complacently as he recognizes the handwriting; he opens it slowly, and reads,* —

MY DEAR BOB, — You are such an old friend, that I feel you should be one of the first to know of my engagement to (*he mumbles the rest.*)

Yours,

MARION DAY.)

AN ABJECT APOLOGY.

SCENE. — *The hallway of a handsome house. A ball is going on. Flowers and growing plants fill every nook and corner. Music is heard in the distance, while many ladies and gentlemen in full dress cross and re-cross the scene. Presently a couple appear, and walk rather listlessly to the upper end of the hall, and take their seat upon a sofa, which is almost entirely screened by large plants. The gentleman looks thirty-five: a thoughtful, earnest face is, perhaps, his most marked physical characteristic. His companion is about two and twenty, tall rather, with a graceful, well-rounded figure. Striking looking she certainly is, her steel-gray*

eyes contrasting strongly with her brown hair and eyelashes. She sits in silence for a few seconds, and then, languidly, —

Miss Grace Elliot. What *is* the matter with you this evening? I thought you said you wished to talk to me.

Mr. Julian Reeves. I did; but I feel so stupid. I've —

Miss Elliot (*fanning herself slowly*). Follow Sydney Smith: begin with plain talk, and trust to something coming out of it.

Mr. Reeves (*pointedly, and in deep bass*). I trust something may come out of it when I *have* spoken.

Miss Elliot (*with a shudder*). Ugh! Don't be so funereal. You speak as if your hour had almost come.

Mr. Reeves. It has: like a walking shadow, I —

Miss Elliot (*interrupting, and impatiently*). What *are* you driving at? I suppose when you can't talk sense, you talk metaphor.

MR. REEVES (*with dignity*). Miss Elliot, I was thinking that —

MISS ELLIOT. Language was given you to disguise your thoughts — I agree with you.

MR. REEVES. I was thinking — I was about to say — (*Just at this moment a pleasant-looking young fellow walking by sees* MISS ELLIOT. *He makes straight for the chair by her, and, with a pleasant,* "Good-evening, Miss Elliot," *and* a "Hello, Reeves," *sits down.* REEVES *stops in the middle of his sentence, and moves sullenly to the end of the sofa. The newcomer smiles at this exhibition, and turns to the young lady.*)

MISS ELLIOT. Well, Mr. Davis, I'm glad to see you. What have you been doing with yourself lately?

MR. DAVIS. Getting a friend married.

MISS ELLIOT. Poor fellow!

MR. DAVIS (*smiling*). It wasn't a fellow: it was a female.

MISS ELLIOT. Poor thing!

MR. REEVES (*from the end of the sofa*). Why do you call the man a poor fellow,

and the woman a poor thing, I'd like to know?

MISS ELLIOT. They call her "a thing," I suppose, because, having married, she's no longer a thinking being.

MR. DAVIS (*laughing*). You don't mean to say that a woman stops thinking when she gives herself up to one man.

MISS ELLIOT. No. She generally stops thinking when she falls in love.

MR. REEVES. Pity 'tis! For after all it's what you women *think* most about.

MISS ELLIOT. About what? Men, or love in the abstract.

MR. REEVES (*sarcastically*). That woman remains to be born who is capable of interesting herself in an abstract idea. Some brilliant individual remarked that.

MISS ELLIOT. You needn't have told us that, it doesn't sound original. (REEVES *looks rather savagely at her, and relapses into silence.* MISS ELLIOT, *turning to* DAVIS) The town's mad on the subject of marriage.

MR. DAVIS. The women, you mean! There have been a great many.

MISS ELLIOT (*throwing herself back, and with a sweep of her fan*). *I* don't think woman is put into this world solely to marry, and be given in marriage. There ought to be something else open to us — woman's sphere is very limited.

MR. DAVIS. Yes, it is. But I'm not so sure it isn't as well.

MISS ELLIOT. Perhaps so. (*And laughing*) It does seem as if we could not do without you. For, after all, most of us go out to marry, and —

MR. DAVIS (*rising*). The rest marry to go out. Good-by. (*He bows himself off.*)

MR. REEVES. Thank Heaven, that little chap's gone! It seems to me you're very polite to him. He's as stupid —

MISS ELLIOT. He isn't stupid at all. He's a very nice fellow.

MR. REEVES (*angrily*). You are very polite to such insufferable men.

MISS ELLIOT (*carelessly*). Certainly! I've been polite to *you* this evening.

MR. REEVES. Thanks. You're in a happy frame of mind.

MISS ELLIOT. That's more than I can

say for you. (*Both are silent for a few minutes.*)

MR. REEVES (*waking from his brown study*). I'm going back home to-morrow night, Miss Elliot.

MISS ELLIOT (*humming snatches from "The Mikado"*). Well!

MR. REEVES (*evidently piqued at her manner*). Well, I'm going home. Aren't you sorry?

MISS ELLIOT (*raising her eyebrows*). I! dear me, why should I be?

MR. REEVES. I — I don't know. I thought you might dislike saying good-by to a *friend* (*pointedly*).

MISS ELLIOT (*naïvely*). Oh, that way! why, yes, indeed.

MR. REEVES (*coming closer to her*). You know I've gotten to look upon you as a great friend, and I hate to say good-by to you. I dreaded for this time to come. These last three weeks have been the happiest I ever spent (*looking earnestly at her*), thanks to you.

MISS ELLIOT (*with a shrug of her shoulders*). Oh, you've changed! Two

weeks ago you told me I treated you outrageously. If I remember rightly, you even called me a flirt; and, by the way, that reminds me — Mr. Vandewater tells me you consider me something of a fiend in that line.

MR. REEVES (*with a frown*). Did he? I never said so to *him*. When I said you treated me outrageously, I merely meant —

MISS ELLIOTT. You shouldn't use such strong language.

MR. REEVES. I merely meant — that you worried me like —

MISS ELLIOT. It's a pity. If you didn't like it, you had the remedy in your own hands.

MR. REEVES. Oh, you know well enough what I mean! It's a second nature with you Southern women. I remember a Savannah girl I met once, who had four men on the string at once. Up to the time they met her, they were good friends. After one week, they were distant to each other; in two weeks, they didn't speak; in three, they desired each other's gore. This delectable young wo-

man threw all four over in twenty-four hours. Such wrecks were never seen. Later they saw the joke of it, and became friends again. *That* girl is still unmarried. So take care.

MISS ELLIOT. I like your impudence. You speak as if marriage was the sole end of woman.

MR. REEVES. Well, it is mostly.

MISS ELLIOT. Pa! the conceit of you men (*laughing*)! I wish we were not so dependent upon you. If women would only devote themselves to something else besides falling in love. (*With sarcasm*) Propinquity — propinquity's what does it. They become a possibility for each other, because there's no other available person about. (*Positively*) I should hate to think I had fallen in love, simply because the man was the only one possible.

MR. REEVES. Then there is one possible?

MISS ELLIOT (*firmly*). I was only supposing. There's no reason why we shouldn't put a little *reason* into the matter. Is there?

MR. REEVES (*interrupting*). None, except that you're a woman.

MISS ELLIOT (*looking at him*). I'll work it out yet.

MR. REEVES. To *his* salvation, you mean.

MISS ELLIOT. No; to my own.

MR. REEVES (*with a sigh*). I hope it'll be to his. (*After a silence, and seriously*) Miss Elliot, I'm afraid I'm not a very joyful companion this evening. You see —

MISS ELLIOT. The dejected 'havior of your visage, I do.

MR. REEVES (*impatiently*). You see, I'm depressed to death about leaving you. (*After a pause*) I don't know whether I'm glad or sorry I met you, anyway.

MISS ELLIOT (*opening her eyes very wide*). Why not, pray?

MR. REEVES. Well, this sort of thing's all very fine; but it can't last. You've affected me most deeply.

MISS ELLIOT. Effected you! How?

MR. REEVES. Well, you've changed my whole self, — my way of looking at things. Haven't men told you what a hold you had on them?

MISS ELLIOT. No.

MR. REEVES (*laughing*). I know what that "no" means.

MISS ELLIOT. I congratulate you. I've seen men who didn't know "no" when they heard it.

MR. REEVES. Well, you've taken a deep hold on me. You've been a strong, and, if the truth must be told, a disturbing element in my life.

MISS ELLIOT (*laughing*). Your life must be wretched, at that rate. If every woman you're devoted to is a disturbing element, that's — let's see — shall we say fifty in the last year? (*And rather seriously*) Mr. Reeves, I don't put the slightest belief in what you say. You say the same to every woman you meet.

MR. REEVES (*as he changes his seat, and warmly*). Bless it, Miss Elliot! Can't you *see* I'm in earnest? Why *won't* you see I'm serious? I sometimes think, if you knew how much influence you women have over us, — how great power for good, — you'd treat us men differently.

MISS ELLIOT. What on earth do you mean by "treat us differently?"

MR. REEVES. Well, you wouldn't trifle with us so.

MISS ELLIOT. Trifle with you, indeed! I believe you think we should take it for granted every man who seems to be attracted by us is in love with us.

MR. REEVES (*pointedly*). They mostly are with *you*.

MISS ELLIOT. Nonsense! Just so sure as we make ourselves agreeable, you say we are flirting. (*Positively*) Mr. Reeves, a woman has no right to believe a man's in love with her, until he tells her so.

MR. REEVES (*with sarcasm*). I've heard these sentiments before.

MISS ELLIOT. It's perfectly true, and right too.

MR. REEVES. It's a flattering unction, doubtless.

MISS ELLIOT (*quickly*). I really believe you men think we should go about as a sort of a sandwich,—"Susceptible young men, beware! This female's dangerous."

MR. REEVES. It would save us poor devils many a heartburn.

MISS ELLIOT. I suppose men's hearts *are* near the surface. (*After a pause*) On your sleeve almost — for women to peck at.

MR. REEVES (*impatiently*). Do you really mean to tell me you don't know when a man's in love with you?

MISS ELLIOT. No.

MR. REEVES (*laughing, but evidently irritated*). That's refreshing. You don't want to know — there's the trouble. A man's attentions flatter you, and you don't like to break with him.

MISS ELLIOT. How, pray, *can* we take action until the man speaks?

MR. REEVES. Very often you won't take action when he does.

MISS ELLIOT (*laughing*). I've known action taken, and rapidly too. It all depends. (*They are silent for a time.* REEVES *turns restlessly in his chair, pulls a couple of leaves off the plant nearest him, and moves back to his seat upon the sofa.*)

MR. REEVES (*earnestly*). Why won't you talk seriously to me? why won't you believe what I say to you? You must know how I hate to say good-by.

MISS ELLIOT (*nervously*). Come, let's go back to the parlor: we've been here long enough.

MR. REEVES (*plaintively*). No, not yet, Miss Elliot. This is the last chance I'll have, and I want to say something to you. (MISS ELLIOT *throws herself back with a wearied air.* REEVES *noticing her apparent indifference*) For Heaven's sake look a little interested.

MISS ELLIOT (*carelessly*). I am! I deeply sympathize!

MR. REEVES (*warmly*). I don't want sympathy. I simply want you to listen to me.

MISS ELLIOT (*smiling*). What *do* you want to do? philosophize?

MR. REEVES (*hopelessly*). Hang philosophy!

MISS ELLIOT. What do you wish then? To talk about yourself?

MR. REEVES (*brightening up*). Yes, that's it.

MISS ELLIOT (*letting her hands drop in her lap*). Well, go on. Oh, piteous predicament!

MR. REEVES. If you'll just be serious for a few minutes — *can't* you see when a man's in earnest.

MISS ELLIOT. I don't know — what are the symptoms?

MR. REEVES. Please be serious. I'm not a child. You know how deeply you've touched me. You've changed my whole life. I've done some work worth while since I met you a year ago. My whole thought has been (*he looks at her, and seeing she's listening*) — has been *you.* (*She gives a slight start.*) If perchance my work should please you — that's been my aim — I felt as if I'd do any thing — make any effort — to make you glad you knew me; glad to have me as a friend.

MISS ELLIOT (*After a pause*). I am your friend! (*Slowly, and looking full at him*) I'm glad we were thrown together.

MR. REEVES. Oh! thanks, Miss Elliot. I'm happy to know that. You've made a different and a happier man out of me.

MISS ELLIOT (*with rising inflection*). I?

MR. REEVES (*passionately*). Yes: you,

you, Miss Elliot. (*He leans towards her, about to speak; she hesitates a moment, and is about to rise, when they both perceive a gentleman coming towards them. He is a spry-looking party, who might be any age from forty to seventy; would pass muster very well, if it were not for the "old" expression about the knees. He speaks rather rapidly, with an attempt at the man-of-the-world style.*)

MR. JOHN LANE. Ah! er — er, Miss Elliot, good-evening.

MISS ELLIOT. Good-evening, Mr. Lane. (*Turning to* MR. REEVES) May I introduce my friend Mr. Reeves. (*And sotto voce*) Speak loud, he's a little deaf.

MR. LANE (*turning his best ear on* MR. REEVES). Mr. what did you — er — say?

MR. REEVES (*putting out his hand*). Mr. Reeves.

MR. LANE. Oh, er — er — happy — er to meet er — you, Mr. Reeves! Lovely ball — er, isn't it?

MR. REEVES and MISS ELLIOT. Lovely.

MR. LANE. How long — er — you been in — er town, Mr. Reeves?

MR. REEVES. Few weeks only.

MR. LANE. Lovely girls here — er — beautiful ball this.

MISS ELLIOT. Beautiful.

MR. REEVES (*sotto voce*). Don't ask him to sit down.

MISS ELLIOT (*with a smile*). Won't you sit down, Mr. Lane. (REEVES *looks daggers, and* MR. LANE *sits down.*)

MR. LANE. I was — er — saying to Miss Smith. You — er — know Miss Smith — er — lovely girl, Miss Smith — I was — er — saying that the house was — er — lovely — er — beautiful this evening.

MISS ELLIOT. Yes; the flowers especially. (MR. LANE *turns to examine the plant beside him.*)

MR. REEVES. What did you ask him to sit down for?

MISS ELLIOT. He'll go to sleep in a minute.

MR. REEVES. I told you I wanted to say something special to you. Why didn't you let the old fool go?

MISS ELLIOT. Because he's very nice to me always. (REEVES *looks disgusted, but brightens as he sees old* LANE *sound asleep.*)

MR. REEVES (*pointing to Lane*). How extraordinary! Does he always do that?

MISS ELLIOT. Always.

MR. REEVES. The lean and slippered pantaloon! Why don't they lock the doors on him?

MISS ELLIOT. Oh! he enjoys himself.

MR. REEVES (*relapsing into his former sober state*). I suppose I can finish what I have to say.

MISS ELLIOT. I don't know. I think we'd better go.

MR. REEVES (*angrily*). Well, the next time I talk seriously to a woman, I'll be whipped for it. Can't you see I'm in love?

MISS ELLIOT (*looking him over, and with a flourish*). You in love? Never!

MR. REEVES. I don't look it?

MISS ELLIOT. No.

MR. REEVES. I don't? Well, that shows how much perception you women have. Philipps informed me yesterday

that any fool could see that I was in love. (*After a pause*) Every one recognizes you're in love, except the one you wish to perceive it.

MISS ELLIOT. That's all very fine; but I've had — let me see — well, fifty men swear they were in love; and I never saw two who were affected in the same way. There's one symptom, however, which all such idiots have in common.

MR. REEVES. What's that?

MISS ELLIOT. They assume a certain right of direction, as it were, and get insulted if you won't give up all your time to *them*, — if you won't do any thing and every thing they may demand. It's decidedly annoying.

MR. REEVES. Why, of course it is. A man's a fool to behave that way. It just piques a woman, and tires her. (*And, after a pause*) Will you go to the german with me to-morrow night? I can leave after it.

MISS ELLIOT (*an amused look passes over her face*). I don't know.

MR. REEVES. Why not? Aren't you going?

MISS ELLIOT. I don't know.

MR. REEVES. Oh! Miss Elliot! come and go.

MISS ELLIOT. Well, perhaps I shall.

MR. REEVES. All right. I'll call for you at —

MISS ELLIOT (*carelessly*). Oh, no, you needn't! (REEVES *looks annoyed.* MISS ELLIOT *perceives it*) My going is really so uncertain.

MR. REEVES (*impatiently*). Now, there's no reason in the world why you should not go.

MISS ELLIOT (*interrupting*). How do you know, pray?

MR. REEVES. Well, you know perfectly well you've got nothing to do this evening. Every one is going.

MISS ELLIOT. Well, I'm not.

MR. REEVES (*much annoyed*). Now, what on earth is the use of taking such a stand as this? You just spoil your own evening, and —

MISS ELLIOT (*laughing*). Ah! you flatter yourself.

MR. REEVES. And mine, too.

MISS ELLIOT. I've no doubt of *that.*

MR. REEVES (*impatiently*). Now, Miss Elliot, do be reasonable. I've got to go back to-morrow night, and I shall not see you for a long time. I have so looked forward to dancing to-morrow with you! (*Plaintively*) I think you might.

MISS ELLIOT. Now, see here, Mr. Reeves, you've been with me too much already, — people are beginning to talk. I don't care to have my name so constantly mentioned with yours.

MR. REEVES. Dear me, it's nothing new, I'm sure. It's been mentioned with a half a dozen this summer.

MISS ELLIOT (*quickly*). Mr. Reeves, you forget yourself. What right have you to set yourself up as my keeper, I'd like to know. (*She rises from her seat.*)

MR. REEVES. Where are you going? (MISS ELLIOT *looks at him, but does not answer.*)

MR. REEVES. Going home? (*No reply.*) Are you going to the german to-morrow? (*No reply.*) Will you go with me?

MISS ELLIOT (*curtly and positively*). No.

MR. REEVES. Will you wear some of my flowers?

MISS ELLIOT. No.

MR. REEVES (*doggedly*). Has any one else asked you to go? (*No answer; she starts to move away;* REEVES *follows her.*) May I go with you?

MISS ELLIOT. No.

MR. REEVES (*evidently angry, and walking in front of her*). Now, see here, Miss Elliot, this is no way to treat a man. Why, confound it, I never heard any thing so unreasonable in my life! What under the sun *is* the sense of behaving like this! I simply asked you to dance with me, to walk with me, to wear my flowers, and you reply "I won't," without any reason. Pretty treatment this; I won't stand it.

MISS ELLIOT (*laughing*). Well, I wouldn't.

MR. REEVES (*angrily*). I won't. I suppose you'll go with that Vandewater.

MISS ELLIOT (*slowly*). I should not be surprised if I did.

MR. REEVES (*with a sneer*). He's a nice kind of a man for *you* to go with, — a

vulgar, dissipated cad. The first thing you know, they'll have you in love with and engaged to him.

MISS ELLIOT (*drawing herself up*). Mr. Reeves, what do you mean by speaking to me in this way? Pray let me remind you, that it is none of your business.

MR. REEVES (*desperately*). I merely spoke as a friend. I thought it would be well to tell you what Mrs. Grundy was saying about you in connection with that man.

MISS ELLIOT. Mrs. Grundy can mind her own business. Mr. Vandewater's a friend of mine.

MR. REEVES. Is he, indeed. I'm sorry to hear it. He's a poor specimen, and no associate for a lovely woman like you. The idea of *your* being familiar with him.

MISS ELLIOT (*very angrily, and with rising inflection*). Oh! familiar with *him?* I? You forget yourself, indeed. You'll please remember you are nothing to me — a mere stranger. I familiar with him? — I in love with him? Oh, it's too bad! (*She drops back into her seat. It is evi-*

dently by great self-control only that she keeps from crying. REEVES *stands mute, the picture of despair.*)

MISS ELLIOT (*looking up coldly and haughtily*). Mr. Reeves, you'll please leave me. I little expected such words from you.

MR. REEVES. Oh! Miss Elliot. I beg pardon — I did not mean — I would not for the world say any thing to pain you, but (*coming closer to her*) — but you don't know how I —

MISS ELLIOT (*avoiding him*). Mr. Reeves, you'll please not speak to me. If you won't leave me I — (REEVES *moves off.*)

MR. REEVES. Oh, Miss Elliot! please don't be so hard on me — *let* me explain. (*Sitting down beside her*) I — I — Grace dear, I love —

MISS ELLIOT (*drawing herself back, and very coldly*). Mr. Reeves, please don't speak to me again.

MR. REEVES (*after a pause, and as if resigned to the inevitable*). Good-by, Miss Elliot. (*And then earnestly*) Oh, *can* I

do nothing to make you hear me? (*She shakes her head.*) Well, good-by. (*He rises.*) I shall leave to-morrow morning. And (*in deep bass*) you'll not be troubled with me again. (*Desperately*) I hope *you'll* be happy. You've flirted with me brutally; that's what you've done — good-by, good-by. (*He walks rapidly down the hall, and disappears in the dancing-room.* MISS ELLIOT *looks sadly after him; makes an involuntary gesture as if to detain him, dives violently into her pocket, and wipes away two large tears. In a few minutes she is composed again; and seeing* MR. LANE *still asleep, with a soft* "Mr. Lane," *she wakes that gentleman, who, delightfully oblivious of what's been going on, starts up, and,* —

MR. LANE. Yes — er — I was saying to Miss Smith — er.

MISS ELLIOT (*nervously*). Yes, yes; but would you kindly take me to my chaperon.

MR. LANE. Certainly — er — certainly, with pleasure. (*He offers his arm; she takes it, and they walk on into the conservatory.*)

SCENE. — *The cosily furnished room of a club. Two men in dress-coats are drawn up before a large fire, smoking;* liqueur *glasses, etc., on a small table near by. One is puffing away, regardless of the rate at which a delicious cigar is being used up. His companion rises, and stands with his back to the fire.*

MR. JACK PHILIPPS. Julian, old fellow, you are dreadfully gloomy this evening. What's the matter. Didn't you have it out with Grace Elliot?

MR. REEVES (*gloomily*). I should think I did have it out with her. It's put out, and she's put out, and I'm put out; and it's all off, and I'm glad of it. I hope I'll have a little peace now. Thank Heaven! I'm going back to-morrow. I'll *never* trouble *her* again. (*After a pause*) Jack, you know how much I've stood from her already. (PHILIPPS *nods his head.*) She's been flirting with me, and half a dozen others for that matter, for the last year. Now you know I stole off, and came down to settle the thing one way or the other;

and do you know she *won't* let me come to the point.

MR. PHILIPPS. Why not? How can she help it?

MR. REEVES (*with much emphasis*). How can she help it? You know what women are. Well, I've borne it all without a murmur; but this last is too much. I'll be hanged, if I ever speak to her again, unless she makes an *abject apology*.

MR. PHILIPPS. I've no doubt you're right (*knocking the ashes off his cigar*). She's the worst flirt! But what's she done now?

MR. REEVES. What's she done now? (*Sitting up*) I'll tell you. (*As he lights a fresh cigar*) You know, Jack, she's been simply angelic these last two weeks since I came. I met her at the Dunlap's ball this evening. She was lovely until I told her I wanted to talk to her, and asked her to come out near the conservatory there. Then the racket began. She would not be serious, would not let me get ahead at all; and finally having worried me into a state only short of madness, when I

happened to ask her to go to the german with me to-morrow night, she said she didn't think she'd go. I told her she might as well, for every one would be there, and that I'd call for her. And then, do you know, she said I needn't, and that she wouldn't go with me. Now, what in the Devil do you suppose she did it for? Well, I became angry. I told her I never dreamed of any thing so unreasonable. I asked her if she'd wear some of my flowers. No: she wouldn't either wear my flowers, or go with me. She said I'd been with her continually, and she didn't care to have her name mentioned so constantly with mine. Finally, she said she was going with Vandewater. That *was* too much. I called him a cad; declared him no associate for her; that people would have her engaged to him, the first thing she knew; and altogether lost my head, and made a fool of myself. She got very angry; told me it was none of my business; to go, and not to speak to her again, and so on and so on (*throwing himself back in his*

chair). Oh, it's a mess! (PHILIPPS *smiles complacently*.)

MR. PHILIPPS. What a devil of a time you lovers have!

MR. REEVES. Then, like a fool, I put myself in the wrong by begging her pardon, when it was all her fault. Of course, she wouldn't listen to me. But it's all over now. Blest if I ever speak to her again, unless she apologizes — apologizes most abjectly. What do you think about it?

MR. PHILIPPS. I think you are right, perfectly. I never heard of such nonsense. Thank Heaven, I'm not in any of it!

MR. REEVES (*soliloquising*). She didn't give any reason; simply said, I won't.

MR. PHILIPPS. Now, Julian, old fellow, do stop thinking about her.

MR. REEVES. I would if I could; but it's no use. I fell in love with her the first time I ever saw her, and it's for good and all with me. But, suffer as I may, I'll never speak to her again, unless she apologizes most abjectly.

MR. PHILIPPS (*looking at his watch*). Come, old chap, I must be off; it's half-past one. I'll see you at the german to-morrow.

MR. REEVES. No, you won't.

MR. PHILIPPS. Well, I'll see you afterwards here, before you leave.

MR. REEVES. All right. (PHILIPPS *walks out.*) Good-night!

MR. PHILIPPS. Good-night! (*As* PHILIPPS *leaves the room, he hears* REEVES *mumbling something about* "the confounded contrariness of these females, anyway.")

SCENE. — *A small room off a large dancing-hall.* MISS ELLIOT *is seated with her partner; as* PHILIPPS *approaches, he rises, and bows himself off. After the customary salutations,* —

MR. PHILIPPS. I thought you weren't coming to-night.

MISS ELLIOT (*quickly*). Who told you so?

MR. PHILIPPS. Reeves.

MISS ELLIOT (*with a slight sigh*). Oh! did he?

MR. PHILIPPS. He's going back to Boston to-night.

MISS ELLIOT. Really?

MR. PHILIPPS. Yes. I saw him after the ball last night. He was all broken up about something. Have you been treating him badly again?

MISS ELLIOT (*raising her eyebrows*). I? No; I never treated any one badly in my life.

MR. PHILIPPS. Whew! You women are — well, I was going to say — cheeky. (*She looks surprised.* PHILIPPS *turns round, and, facing her*) See here, Miss Elliot, you and I, and Reeves and I, are old friends. I'm devoted to him, and you and I may as well talk plainly about this matter. You know as well as I do he's very much in love with you, and terribly in earnest; and you've treated the poor devil none too well. It's gone on long enough. Why don't you settle it, one way or the other?

MISS ELLIOT (*naïvely*). Because I

don't want to settle it one way or the other. It's having it neither one way nor the other that's so delightful.

MR. PHILIPPS. Well, that is frank; but why did you worry him so last night?

MISS ELLIOT. I worry him so? What *do* you mean?

MR. PHILIPPS. Oh, you know perfectly well!

MISS ELLIOT. I did nothing for him to take on so about. He's so dreadfully unreasonable: I've allowed him to be with me constantly during the last two weeks, and I had a perfect *right* (*with emphasis*) to say I would not go to this german with him; and, after that, he got furious with me for laughing when he said, "I simply ask you to dance with, to walk with me, and to wear my flowers, and you say you won't, without any reason on earth." Now, isn't that delicious? Isn't that just like a man? He gets insulted because I won't "talk with him, walk with him, dance with him, and wear his flowers." Well, I got angry, when he began to talk like that, and I told him to

go. Then he spoke outrageously to me and of my friends. I'd rather not tell you the rest. But *he can go.* I am sure I don't care. Why doesn't he marry Miss Hearst, anyway?

MR. PHILIPPS. You know very well why he don't.

MISS ELLIOT (*decisively*). Well, that's all. He may go back to Boston.

MR. PHILIPPS (*seriously*). He's very angry, — says you've treated him outrageously; and that he'll never speak to you again unless you make an *abject apology.*

MISS ELLIOT (*laughing — rather bitterly, perhaps*). Abject apology, indeed. I have nothing to apologize for. I tell you this is the end of it. I certainly shall not speak to him unless he begs *my* pardon *most humbly.* (*At this moment her partner comes up and takes her off.* PHILIPPS *rises, walks slowly round the room, and exit.*)

SCENE. — *Room in club-house as before; enter* PHILIPPS. REEVES *is seated before the fire, deep in thought; he looks up as his friend comes in.*

MR. REEVES (*gloomily*). Well.

MR. PHILIPPS. Well, I saw her (*he sits down*).

MR. REEVES (*with a grunt*). Did you?

MR. PHILIPPS. I did, — the fair, the inexpressive she, — and she declares she'll never have any thing more to do with you until you beg her pardon most humbly.

MR. REEVES. Did she? I like that. (*Getting up and facing* PHILIPPS) Did she seem to care?

MR. PHILIPPS. To tell the truth, I couldn't make out; I think she does. I told her she'd better stop this kind of thing, as I didn't believe you'd stand it any longer.

MR. REEVES. What did she say to that?

MR. PHILIPPS. Nothing; but I think she remembered it.

MR. REEVES (*positively*). I suppose

she thought I'd go to see her to-day, but I didn't. I don't intend to be trifled with any longer. (*Looking at his watch*) By Jove! I'll miss that train. Well, I'll say good-by, Jack. I'm awfully obliged for all your kindness. Write me, if any thing turns up.

MR. PHILIPPS. I will. Good-by.

MR. REEVES. Good-by. (*They shake hands cordially, and exit* REEVES.)

SCENE. — *The parlor of* MISS ELLIOT'S *house, a couple of months later. It is a gloomy afternoon in February.* REEVES *enters, drops with a deep sigh into a large chair, and takes out a letter which he reads.*

"MY DEAR JULIAN, — Our fair friend seemed to get along finely for some weeks after you left. Later, however, she showed signs of drooping, seemed always very glad to meet your humble servant, asked for you and your health, and went so far, a few days ago, as to say that she would like to see you. I do now honestly think that she repents. Do come down; and, if you keep your

head about you (though you lose your heart), you may carry off this fair penitent in triumph. All luck to you, old fellow! I leave town to-morrow, so I shall not see you.

"Sincerely your friend,

"JACK PHILIPPS."

As he finishes he gets up, and walks to the mantel, on which there are several pictures of his sweetheart. He picks one up, and is looking intently at it, when, hearing the rustle of a dress, he turns, and finds himself face to face with MISS GRACE ELLIOT. *That young lady looks somewhat pale, and by no means so blooming as a couple of months back.* REEVES *takes all this in at a glance. The girl comes forward, and extends her hand frankly to him. He takes it, looks at her for an instant, and they sit down near the window.*

MR. REEVES. I've come to beg your pardon most humbly, Miss Elliot.

MISS ELLIOT. Yes?

MR. REEVES. I know it was very ungentlemanly — very rude; but you can't

think I would intentionally hurt your feelings, do you?

MISS ELLIOT. No.

MR. REEVES. You don't know how dreadfully I've felt, how much I've suffered, all these weeks, because of this foolish misunderstanding.

MISS ELLIOT (*dolefully*). So have I.

MR. REEVES. But I've come to say (*she looks up calmly in his face*), to say that I love you; that I've loved you all along; that you've taken entire possession of me. It was all very well to fight against it; but I cannot live in peace or accomplish any thing without you.

MISS ELLIOT. Yes?

MR. REEVES (*coming closer to her, and almost in a whisper*). I've come to tell you so; to ask if you love me. Do you love me enough to become my wife? I know how much I'm asking of you, my darling girl! I've little to offer you in a worldly way, — nothing but the true love of a man who would do and dare any thing for you. (*After a pause*) Don't you love me?

MISS ELLIOT. Yes (*as she places her hand in his*).

MR. REEVES. Grace, dearest (*he catches her hand in both his own, and reverently and fondly kisses it. As he looks up, his eyes meet hers. A calm, peaceful smile answers his appealing look. Neither speaks for some minutes*) — Grace, dear, will you kindly tell me why you behaved so to me that evening two months ago?

MISS ELLIOT (*demurely*). Because I knew what you were going to say, and I wasn't ready to say *yes* then, and (*catching his hand in hers*) yet I didn't want to say *no*. (*Laughing*) But I never made *An Abject Apology*.

THE END.

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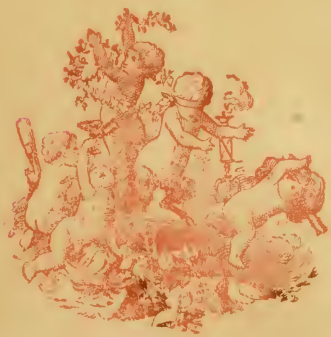

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